

Statement: University of Minnesota Holiday Celebration Guidelines – Dec. 13, 2011

The University of Minnesota is the state's fifth largest employer and has an extraordinarily diverse workforce, and promoting a welcoming inclusive workplace is something about which the institution is intrinsically committed.

At this time of year, the University's Offices for Equity and Diversity, and Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action hear from employees who have concerns about both a welcoming environment for all and individual rights related to religious expression. These offices also receive requests for guidance on balancing the challenging dual responsibilities of protecting the individual's right to religious expression with the institution's obligation not to endorse any one particular religion.

The Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative action recently sent a memo to University human resource managers with suggestions for how to balance these rights. The memo did not go to all employees. It was intended to help human resources professionals advise managers on ways to join in community and celebrate in meaningful and inclusive ways. The suggestions in the memo do not represent University policy. They are instead simply an expression of our commitment to equity and diversity, which we believe enriches our campus community.

The University does not in any way prohibit individuals from displaying Christmas decorations or other religious items in individual workspaces. However, when it comes to institutionally-supported events, such as department-wide holiday celebrations, it is critical that these events are secular. The *institution* does not—and cannot—support any religion or religious celebrations.